

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 43 No. 11

November 15, 1974

Whole No. 506

## Horatio Alger: Symbol For Success

By Marjorie Heins

Conclusion



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 178

DAWLEY'S NEW WAR NOVELS

Publisher: T. R. Dawley, 13 & 15 Park Row, New York, N. Y. Issues: 11 (highest number seen advertised). Dates: 1865. Schedule of Issue: Not known. Size: 7½x4½". Pages: 100 or more. Price: 25c. Colored pictorial cover with 5 to 6 black and white line drawings inside. Contents: Stories of the Civil War. At least two editions were published, the first had the center picture framed in a gray and red picture frame effect. The second as pictured above on orange paper. List of titles are printed elsewhere in this issue.

## Horatio Alger: Symbol For Success

By Marjorie Heins

### Conclusion

What is perhaps more surprising than the existence of a spurious version of Alger's tales is the existence of an updated symbolic rendition of the more traditional version. In a 1940 radio broadcast featuring a dramatization of Alger's *From Farm Boy to Senator*, New York Governor Lehman emphasized the existence of "unrestricted opportunities (particularly in science, which has now usurped the place of the undeveloped American continent of the Nineteenth Century) . . . for those who have the vision, the equipment, the industry and the courage to seize them." Declaring that he was an Alger fan as a boy, the governor continued,

I was particularly interested because he showed in his books that the United States was a country of great opportunity for all and he was always a steadfast advocate of the democratic principles on which our nation was created and which have made it great.

The New York Times obituary of Benjamin Fairless (d. 1962), ex-chairman of the Board of U. S. Steel, referred to his Alger-like climb to success. Charles Luckman, former head of the Lever Brothers Corporation and now a prominent New York architect, explained the A B C's of success in an article in the New York Tribune in 1962: "A is for ability, B is for breaks, and C is for courage. Without any of these, no man can be continuously successful." And in January, 1962, James Reston wrote in his New York Times column that Republicans wanted candidates with an Horatio Alger image.

Perhaps the most outstanding revival of what might be labeled the updated version of the traditional Alger legend is the annual contest sponsored by the American Association of Schools and Colleges in which Horatio Alger American Leader Awards are given to the year's most outstanding industrialists, businessmen, and educators who have risen from "humble beginnings." In its account of the 1953 ceremony, the New York Times stated that the awards were "SYMBOLIC OF" (emphasis added) the recipients' "contributions to the American tradition and of their advancement to positions of great responsibility." Dr. Milton Eisenhower, a recipient of the 1952 award, presented the awards. After referring to Horatio Alger's stories, he concluded,

There are many Horatio Algers in every phase of American life today.

The plain fact is that most of our industrial, educational, governmental, professional and cultural leaders began in humble surroundings.

The selection of the award winners was determined from ballots sent by three thousand "college leaders" throughout the United States. According to the committee, the purpose of the awards is "to guide and direct the attitudes and ideals of American youth toward the benefits of our free enterprise system."

In order to further the above aim, the committee which set up the original award in (around) 1950 also established a Horatio Alger College Student's

**DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP**—Vol. 43, No. 11, Whole No. 506—November 15, 1974  
Published monthly at 821 Vermont St., Lawrence, Kansas 66044. Edited by Edward T. LeBlanc, 87 School St., Fall River, Mass. 02720. Second class postage paid at Lawrence, Kansas 66044. Assistant Editor, Ralph F. Cummings, 161 Pleasant St., South Grafton, Mass. 01560. Subscription: \$5.00 per year. Ad rates—10c per word; \$2.00 per column inch; \$4.00 per quarter page; \$6.00 per half page and \$10.00 per full page. Ads should be submitted by the 15th of the month in order to assure publication in the following month's issue.

Postmaster: Send form 3579 to 821 Vermont St., Lawrence, Kans. 66044



Award (offering \$100 to each recipient) in 1951, and a Horatio Alger High School Graduate Award consisting of a first year college scholarship (of \$200) in 1953. Students, all of whom held jobs while attending high school, were chosen for the latter award on the basis of financial need, scholastic ability and an essay on "The American Free Enterprise System and the Equality of Opportunity It Offers." The money for the awards was donated by several large industrial concerns. The Rev. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, national chairman of the Horatio Alger awards committee of the American Schools and Colleges Association praised both the students for keeping alive "the notable tradition of working one's way through school," and American industry "for carrying out its responsibility to youth."

The Horatio Alger achievement awards are significant for a number of reasons. They are perhaps the most outstanding manifestation of Horatio-Alger-as-symbol. In an era in which his books are no longer read and have the universal reputation among critics of being sheer drivel, Alger's name has been given to an award honoring success in working one's way to the top in the business world and in putting oneself through school, signifying the importance of education for such an achievement. It is also noteworthy that the Horatio Alger awards were inaugurated in the 1950's, during the "Eisenhower Era," a period which is renowned, among other things, for its promotion of business and private industry. In addition, the explicit purpose of the contest was to persuade American youth of the benefits of "our free enterprise system." It seems rather interesting that it was deemed necessary to resort to such tactics to remind American youth of the advantages of a capitalistic economy. And that Horatio Alger, a well-known and highly criticized children's author of a by-gone era, should be invoked as THE symbol of inspiration. Could it be that an element of the American middle class has grown so unsure of what was at one time taken for granted that artificial stimulation is now needed for reassurance? And that in its panic it has again turned to a man who was able to write for the masses that which they were so eager to endorse?

Most people today, if they have heard of Horatio Alger at all, consider him to be as much a myth as the rags-to-riches legend itself. It seems incredible to many people today, after they have examined his books, that Alger could have made a fortune from such "drivel." And yet for a period of over forty years (from 1868 through the first decade of the twentieth century) not a few teachers and preachers, parents, libraries and Sunday schools wholeheartedly endorsed them and awarded them as prizes to youngsters who eagerly devoured one title after another. If his books did not depict reality, then they must have captured a dream that was dear to the hearts of many American people—a dream so real that the very name Horatio Alger became in and of itself a legendary symbol that is invoked even today. Although his actual influence during his own time and since has probably been vastly overrated, as a popular manifestation of the rags-to-riches legend, Horatio Alger cannot be lightly dismissed.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Due to the extensive number of works consulted, I find it best to present this bibliography in the form of an essay, arranging the sources under five major groupings: 1—biographies; 2—general background sources; 3—primary sources; 4—interpretive articles; 5—helpful sources on specific problems. There is in some instances a fine line between primary sources and interpretive articles, depending upon whether I considered the articles as reflections of the opinions of the times in which they were written or took them at face value as



interpretive essays. Sources not given specific credit in the text either duplicated in articles cited or supplied the author of this paper with necessary background knowledge.

**BIOGRAPHIES:** To date no adequate biography has been written on Horatio Alger. The standard work by Herbert R. Mayes, *Alger: A Biography Without a Hero* (New York: Macy-Massius, 1928), is poorly written and contains a number of glaring factual errors which have been repeated by numerous writers and other biographers. John Tebbel's *From Rags to Riches: Horatio Alger and the American Dream* (New York: Macmillan, 1963) is essentially a rewrite of Mayes' biography containing all of the latter's errors and much of his actual wording. Ralph D. Gardner's *Horatio Alger or the American Hero Era* (Mendota, Ill.: Wayside Press, 1964) is an insipid work by an overly nostalgic fan, although it does contain an excellent annotated bibliography of Alger's first editions and an essay on their monetary value. The "limited edition" by Frank Gruber, *Horatio Alger, Jr.: A Biography and Bibliography of the Best Selling Author of All Time* (West Los Angeles: Grove Jones Press, 750 copies, 1961) does, once one has reconciled himself to the author's obnoxious egotism, manages to correct quite a few of the errors originating with Mayes' biography (in spite of its sensational title).

**2. GENERAL BACKGROUND SOURCES:** It is extremely important for the social and/or intellectual historian to know something of the broader "climate of opinion" and the forces molding it during the period covering his subject. Henry Steele Commager's *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) was an invaluable source in this respect. John M. Blum, et al, *The National Experience* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), chapters 17-19, was especially useful in supplying general historical perspective on the "Gilded Age." Spiller, Thorpe, et al., *Literary History of the United States*, revised edition in one volume (New York: Macmillan, 1960) was especially helpful in its presentation of the major literary trends during that period. Irvin G. Wyllie's *The Self-Made Man in America: The Myth of Rags to Riches* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1954) was an extremely valuable source on the wider aspect of the problem with which this paper deals. So also was Edward Chase Kirkland's *Dream and Thought in the Business Community, 1860-1900*.

**3. PRIMARY SOURCES:** This section is almost self-explanatory. All primary sources are by their nature valuable from one standpoint or another. However, I was especially grateful for all of the contemporary reviews of Alger's works that I could find, which, as I have mentioned in the text, were few and hard to come by. Among these were: E. L. Godkin, ed., "The Last of the Children's Books," *The Nation*, IX (Dec. 30, 1869), p. 587; Mary Mapes Dodge, ed., *St. Nicholas: Scribner's Illustrated Magazine for Boys and Girls*, volumes 1-2, 1873-4; Henry Ward Beecher, ed., Review of *Ben, the Luggage Boy*, *Christian Union*, I, 24 (July 11, 1870), p. 375; and an advertisement of the Horatio Alger series quoting from *Pleasant Hours for Boys and Girls* (a juvenile magazine) at the end of J. T. Trowbridge, *The Young Surveyor* (Philadelphia: Coates and Co., 1903).

Several unsigned articles and editorials in the *New York Times* were especially useful, some more so than others, for tracing the evolution of public opinion on Alger: "Boys Today Doubt Alger Success Code" (Feb. 3, 1932), p. 17; "Lehman Speaks as Old Alger Fan in Acclaiming Opportunities" (March 30, 1940), p. 9; Editorial: "Ragged Dick," (Jan. 15, 1942), p. 18; Editorial: "Days of Heroes," (Feb. 22, 1943), p. 16; "Horatio Alger Is an Unknown to 92% of Boys and Girls in Seven Clubs in City" (Jan. 13, 1947),



p. 23; "Ten U. S. Leaders Get Alger Awards" (April 9, 1953), p. 19; "Five Students Earn Horatio Alger Cash" (Sept. 22, 1953), p. 36; "Harlem Youngsters Get Books by Horatio Alger" (Jan. 17, 1958), p. 27; "Topics" (Jan. 13, 1959), p. 46.

Other useful primary sources include: Brooks Atkinson, "Critic at Large: The Case of Horatio Alger Is Reopened, and Some Character Witnesses Speak," *New York Times* (Sept. 18, 1964), p. 32; Can Allen Bradley, "New Yorker Owns Every Alger Book—Supplies 'Luke Walton' Copy for Daily News Series," *Chicago Daily News* (July 21, 1961); *Chicago Tribune*, "Death of Horatio Alger" (July 19, 1899), p. 3; *Christian Science Monitor*, "Horatio Alger: Mirror of World Opinion" (Feb. 23, 1961), p. 14; Ralph D. Gardner, "Letters to the Editor: Horatio Alger," *New York Times Book Review* (Aug. 30, 1964), p. 25; Marion B. Smith, *Survey of Social Science*, revised edition (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1945); and Oswald Garrison Villard, ed., "The Cynical Youngest Generation," *The Nation* (Feb. 17, 1932).

And finally, no list of primary sources would be complete without a representative sampling of Alger's books. I was able to obtain the following: *Struggling Upward and Other Works* with an introduction by Russel Crouse (New York: Crown Publishers, 1945), which includes the following four titles: *Ragged Dick*, which contains a very detailed portrayal of old New York, and is considered by many critics to be Alger's best work; *Struggling Upward*, an "average" Alger which contains a sampling of his Western style; *Phil the Fiddler*, Alger's one "socially significant" work, written as an attack upon the padrone system; and *Jed, the Poorhouse Boy*, which was hastily and absent-mindedly written; almost a parody of Alger's own style.

4. INTERPRETIVE ARTICLES: One of the most valuable works for this entire paper, as I mentioned in the text, was R. Richard Wohl's "The Rags to Riches Story: an Episode of Secular Idealism," Bendix and Lipset, editors, *Class, Status and Power: A Reader in Social Stratification* (Glencoe, 1953). Rychard Fink's "Horatio Alger as a Social Philosopher," introduction to *Ragged Dick and Mark, the Match Boy* (New York: Collier Books, 1962) was another very useful article, although Fink perhaps takes Alger's "social philosophy" a bit too seriously. The article, as does Wohl's, contains an excellent bibliography.

Four other extremely useful articles are: Thomas Meehan, "A Forgettable Centenary: Horatio Alger," *New York Times Magazine* (June 28, 1964); Stewart Holbrook, "Horatio Alger Jr. and *Ragged Dick*," *New York Times Book Review* (July 2, 1944); John P. Sisk, "Rags to Riches: Horatio Alger and the Age of the Robber Barons," *Commonweal* (Jan. 3, 1958), pp. 353-4; and Frederick Lewis Allen, "Horatio Alger, Jr.," *Saturday Review of Literature* (Sept. 17, 1938).

Clifton Fadiman's "Party of One," *Holiday*, XXI (Feb. 1957) was useful, among other things, for pointing out the anachronism of Alger's brand of morality in today's world. Henry R. Luce, ed., "For It Was Indeed He," *Fortune*, IX, 4 (April 1934) is an exposé article on the influence of Horatio Alger and his Works. Brooks Atkinson's "Critic at Large: Some Animadversions on Horatio Alger, Whose Own Success Story Was Banal," *New York Times* (July 24, 1964), p. 24, is an extremely cutting article on the influence of Horatio Alger and his works. David Ferris Kirby's "The Author of the Alger Books for Boys," *New York Times Magazine* (Jan. 10, 1932), p. 21, is rather trite as is B. Wendell Goodwin's "Phoenix Nest," *Saturday Review of Literature* (April 6, 1946), p. 28. Stewart Molbrook's "Laissez Faire and Mr. Alger," *Lost Men of American History* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1946), chapter 4, tends to overemphasize the influence of social Darwinism on Alger's writing, which



was a more naive strain of rugged individualism than that of Spencer or Drew. Henry Popkin's "American Myth," a review of *The Dream of Success* by Kenneth S. Lynn (New York: Little, Brown, 1955) *Commonweal*, LXII, 17 (July 29, 1955) is an excellent review of a book that overemphasizes Alger's influence on five American writers, including Norris, London and Dreiser. Hal Borland's "He Made the Success Story a Success," review of Tebbel's and Gardner's biographies, *New York Times Book Review* (July 19, 1964), p. 16, is an excellent review of those two works. Marshall W. Fishwick's "Horatio Alger's Golden Ladder," *Wisdom*, I, 2 (Feb. 1956); and "The Rise and Fall of Horatio Alger," *Saturday Review* (Nov. 17, 1956) are both glib and superficial articles.

Other interpretive articles include: Malcolm Cowley, "Books in Review: The Alger Story," *The New Republic* (Sept. 10, 1964), pp. 319-20; Wilford J. Funk, ed., "A Forgotten Boys' Classic," *The Literary Digest* (Jan. 9, 1926); Wilford J. Funk, ed., "Personal Glimpses: Frank A. Munsey as a Horatio Alger Hero," *The Literary Digest* (Jan. 9, 1926); Ralph D. Gardner, "Luke Walton: A Hero Is Born: How Alger Got Idea for Newsboy Story," *Chicago Daily News* (July 21, 1961), p. 7; Henry F. and Katherine Pringle, "The Rebellious Parson," *Saturday Evening Post* (Feb. 10, 1951); L. H. Robbins, "Alger: No Alger Hero: A Second-Rate Writer Who Left His Mark on America," *New York Times Magazine* (July 16, 1939); and Harrison E. Salisbury, "End Papers," review of John Tebbel's "From Rags to Riches," *New York Times Book Review* (Feb. 26, 1964), p. 33.

5. **HELPFUL SOURCES ON SPECIFIC PROBLEMS:** Useful information concerning Alger's publishers was found in Quentin Reynolds' *The Fiction Factory, or From Pulp Row to Quality Street* (New York: Random House, 1955) and Madeleine B. Stern's *Imprints on History: Book Publishers and American Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956). D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Garden City, N. Y., 1935) was helpful in enumerating Franklin's thirteen virtues. Dixon Wecter's *The Hero in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963) supplied me with my information on the influence of the McGuffey Readers, and Forrest Wilson's *Crusader in Crinoline: The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1941) led me to a much needed contemporary review in the *Christian Union*.

### MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- 264 Robert D. Sampson, 609 Holmes Ave., N. E., Huntsville, Alabama 35801 (New address)
- 370 Dallas Public Library, Periodicals Assistant, 1354 Commerce St., Dallas, Texas 75201 (New member)
- 371 Library, Queensland Inst. of Tech., Box 246, North Quay, Brisbane 4001, Australia (New member)
- 86 David K. Edelberg, 316 North Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60601 (New address)

### DAWLEY'S NEW WAR NOVELS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Mosby, the Guerrilla                               | 7. Perdita, the Demon Refugee's Daughter, by Dion Haco, Esq. |
| 2. Pauline, the Female Spy                            | 8. Larry, the Army Dog Robber, by Dion Haco, Esq.            |
| 3. Semmes, the Pirate                                 | 9. Booth, the Assassin                                       |
| 4. Killdare, the Black Scout                          | 10. Hawks, the Conscript, by Dion Haco, Esq.                 |
| 5. Osgood, the Demon Refugee                          | 11. Clarissa, the Conscript's Bride, by Dion Haco, Esq.      |
| 6. Cheatham; or, The Swamp Dragon, by Dion Haco, Esq. |  |

## NEWS NOTE

Carcenet Press Limited of 266 Councillor Lane, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 5PN England is offering THE BOY'S DUMAS: G. A. HENTY: ASPECTS OF VICTORIAN PUBLISHING, by John Cargill Thompson, at a pre-publication price of \$10.50. The contents include: "The Fascination of Collecting Henty," "A Guide to the American editions," "Index to Henty's Illustrators." Your editor has reserved his copy. Anyone interested in Henty, either as a collector or as a reader is invited to do likewise. No money is to be sent, just reserve a copy. Payment is to be made upon receipt of the book.

Back numbers Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup (quite a few reprints, can't be helped). Don't have the complete set of No. 1 to 237 inclusive, but almost, lacking only a few numbers. 10c each or \$21.00 postpaid. Have at least 230 numbers or more. Also two indexes, 1 Pioneer and Scouts of the Old West, Birthday number, War Library list and Dime Novel Catalog.

**Ralph F. Cummings**

161 Pleasant St., So. Grafton, Mass.  
01560

## WANTED

Secret Service No. 863, Liberty Boys Nos. 800, 774, 798, 799, Wild West Weekly Nos. 654, 649, 650, 651, 660, 662, 664, 665, 668, 670, 671, 704, 710. Please state price and condition.

**Richard Kingsley**

3111 E. Minnehaha Pkwy.  
Minneapolis, Minn. 55417

## FOR SALE

12 dime novels of our choice for \$10.

Reading copies, but complete with covers. The package will include items from both the colored cover and black and white era. Quantity limited so get your order in early.

**Edward T. LeBlanc**

87 School St.  
Fall River, Mass. 02720

## WANTED

The following books, by

**JOHN O'HARA**

cloth or paper, condition immaterial  
so as text is complete.

THE HAT ON THE BED  
HOPE OF HEAVEN  
PAL JOEY  
TEN NORTH FREDERICK  
A FAMILY PARTY  
FROM THE TERRACE  
SERMONS & SODA WATER  
ASSEMBLY  
THE BIG LAUGH  
ELIZABETH APPLETON

**C. V. CLARK**

P. O. Box 2841, Elmwood Station  
Providence, R. I. 02901

## FOR SALE

**BRECKENRIDGE, GERALD**

Radio Boys as Soldiers of Fortune. Burt. Good	2.00
Radio Boys on Secret Service Duty. Burt. VG, d/j part missing	2.50
Radio Boys on Secret Service Duty. Burt. Good	2.00
Radio Boys on the Mexico Border. Burt. Good	2.00
Radio Boys on the Mexican Border. Burt. Fair	1.50
Radio Boys Rescue the Lost Alaska Expedition. Good. Burt (2)	2.00
Radio Boys Rescue the Lost Alaska Expedition. Fair. Burt	1.50
Radio Boys Seek the Lost Atlantis. Burt. Good	2.00

**EDWARD T. LE BLANC, 87 School Street, Fall River, Mass. 02720**



## WANTED

Horatio Alger books. List is incomplete, so advise of any you have (hard-cover, paperback; autographs; anything with Alger's pen-names, Arthur Lee Putnam or Arthur Hamilton). When responding, always indicate name of publisher, condition, date, and asking price. If you haven't any ALGER items now, PLEASE FILE THIS AND NOTIFY ME WHEN YOU DO.

### WANTED IN ANY EDITION, ANY PUBLISHER

Timothy Crump's Ward

Tom Brace

Dan, the Detective

A New York Boy

Making His Mark

Striving for Fortune

Forging Ahead

Andy Burke's Fortune

Tom Tracy

Wanted—Alger paperbacks published by Aldine, Burt, Lupton, Lovell, Munsey, Ogilvie, Street & Smith and U. S. Book Co.

Wanted—Alger serializations (full runs or single copies) in Argosy or Golden Argosy. Army and Navy Weekly, Good News, Half Holiday, Leslie's Popular Monthly, New York Weekly, Pleasant Hours, Sunshine.

Always interested in ALGERS published by American Pub. Corp., Brown, Babin & Co., Carleton, H. T. Coates, Loring, John W. Lovell Co., Ogilvie, Penn, Porter & Coates, and U. S. Book Co.

WANTED: The Disagreeable Woman by Julian Starr, published by Dillingham, 1895.

WANTED: Any first editions or signed material by the above author.

DEALERS: Please send me your catalogues.

## DICK SEDDON

4 Edgewater Place, Wirochester, Mass. 01890